

1ST SUNDAY OF LENT  
FEBRUARY 21, 2010

PASTOR'S CORNER  
HOW DO I GET TO BE A MEMBER OF PARISH COUNCIL?

Parish Council has become a very important part of the structure of any parish. Its purpose is to formulate parish policy, foster good communication, and provide leadership by clarifying parish vision, establishing goals, and witnessing the gospel message in the larger community and the world. Our SJV Parish Council is comprised of 13 members: the two parish priests and two trustees are ex-officio members, there are three officers chosen from among the membership, and six members sent to council, one each from the six standing committees.

In the past there were nominations for Parish Council from the parish at large and then a discernment among the nominees themselves to determine who would be seated. I have found that it works better to have nominations for members to the six standing committees and then after one year of service on a committee, a person becomes eligible to be discerned to the Parish Council. I believe it is the committees who really determine the direction of the parish in their specific area. The committee is then represented on the Parish Council, which listens to what work is being accomplished and monitors the committee to see that what it is accomplishing fits into the overall vision and mission of the parish. The Parish Council also approves and monitors the parish budget which, of course, impacts the work of each committee as well. So when a parishioner serves on a committee first, he or she comes to the Parish Council table with some experience of parish life and can be a much more effective councilor.

Beginning today and over the next several weekends you will be hearing explanations of the work of the six standing committees: Christian Formation, Human Concerns, Administrative Services/Finance, Prayer and Worship, School, and Stewardship. As you listen to the description, ask yourself if you are being called to join or whom you could recommend. Then on the weekend of March 20 and 21, nomination forms will be passed out to accept your nominations. Those nominated by self or someone else will be notified of their nomination by letter and invited to the next meeting of the committee which will be on Common Leadership Night April 12. If after attending that meeting the nominee accepts the nomination, he or she is welcome to attend the May and June meetings as well and then to become a full member of the committee on July 1 according to the guidelines of each committee. In the event there are too many nominees interested in the committee, a discernment will be held at the May meeting. In June the committee will discern a one year veteran to serve a one year term on Parish Council and after that meeting, the new members are official.

No system is perfect, of course, and while I really like this method, I understand that some who want to serve on Parish Council don't want to first serve a year on a committee. However, that one drawback is not strong enough to counteract the benefit for

the Parish Council itself and thus the parish as a whole. This method strengthens the committees and really challenges them to be productive.

We have not yet written this process in stone and so it is open to adaptation or even elimination after a trial period, but if it seems to work well for SJV, the Parish Council will then rewrite our Constitution and By-Laws to comply and send them to the Archdiocese for final approval.

Listen carefully, consider a commitment, or encourage someone else. Participate in the process. This is your parish, and it cannot operate without your interest.

Blessings and have a joyful Lent,

Fr. Ken Knippel